

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Region II
Jacob K. Javits Federal Office Building
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1311
New York, New York 10278



FEMA

July 6, 2015

Bob Martin
Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
401 E. State St
7th Floor, East Wing
P.O. Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Dear Commissioner Martin,

It has recently come to my attention that the Cities of Elizabeth and Rahway, in Union County, have had questions about how to obtain and utilize the Federal Emergency Agency's (FEMA) Best Available Data for floodplain management in areas behind the flood control structures in their communities.

This is understandable, as we have published several flood hazard datasets for those communities, with the most recent, the preliminary Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) issued on February 3, 2015. In those preliminary regulator products, there is a Notice To Users, that states:

***ATTENTION:** On FIRM panels 34039C0024G and 34039C035G the Elizabeth River levee and on FIRM panels 34039C0043G and 34039C0044G the Rahway River levee have not been demonstrated by the community or levee owner(s) to meet the requirements of Section 65.10 of the NFIP regulations in 44 CFR as it relates to the levee's capacity to provide 1-percent annual chance flood protection. The subject areas are identified on FIRM panels (with notes and bounding lines) and in the FIS report as potential areas of flood hazard data changes based on further review.*

FEMA has updated the levee analysis and mapping procedures for non-accredited levees. Until such time as FEMA is able to initiate a new flood risk project to apply the new procedures, the flood hazard information on the aforementioned FIRM panel(s) that are affected by the Elizabeth River and Rahway River levees are being added as a snapshot of the prior previously effective information presented on the FIRMs and FIS reports dated September 20, 2006. As indicated above, it is expected that affected flood hazard data within the subject area could be significantly revised. This may result in floodplain boundary changes, 1-percent annual chance flood elevation changes, and/or changes to flood hazard zone designations.

The effective FIRM panels (and the FIS report) will again be revised at a later date to update the flood hazard information associated with the Elizabeth River and Rahway River levees when FEMA is able to initiate and complete a new flood risk project to apply the new levee analysis and mapping procedures.

While the February 2015 FIS and FIRMs refer to the 2006 effective regulatory products for flood insurance purchase requirements, more recent flood hazard mapping, data, and information has been developed for these areas through the post-Sandy Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) data recovery effort. *The ABFE information developed for the areas behind the levees in Rahway and Elizabeth is considered Best Available Data and should be utilized in conjunction*

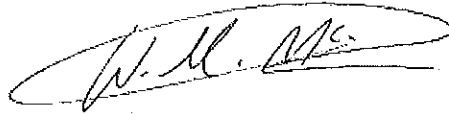
with the current effective FIS/FIRM (whichever is more restrictive) for floodplain management and land use decisions.

The ABFE information can be accessed directly through FEMA Region II's coastal flood hazard web site at:

<http://fema.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=6bd4d299935545e9b30207972b948376>

I hope this information is helpful, and respectfully request that you share this letter with your team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. McDonnell", enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

William McDonnell
Deputy Mitigation Director &
Floodplain Management & Flood Insurance Branch Chief
DHS/FEMA Region II
26 Federal Plaza
New York, New York

CC:

Mr. Charles A. Richman, Commissioner, NJ Dept. of Community Affairs

Mr. David B. Fanz, Assistant Director, NJ Division of Land Use Regulation

Mr. John H. Moyle, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Manager Bureau of Dam Safety and Flood Control

Honorable J. Christian Bollwage, Mayor, City of Elizabeth, NJ

Honorable Samson D. Seinman, Mayor, City of Rahway NJ